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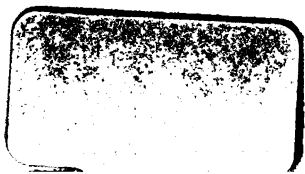
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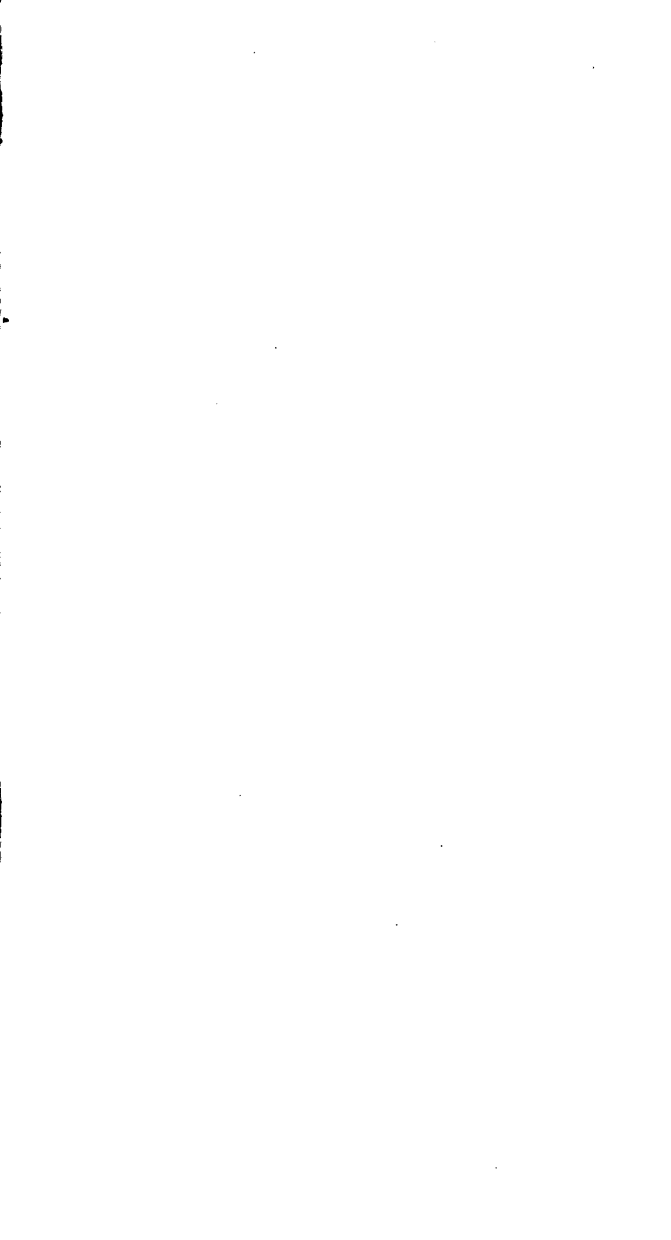
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AN
EPISTLE
OF

True Christian Love.

BY
GEORGE WHITEHEAD.

6421

This Epistle of ours who was highly esteemed in our Religious Society, was brought forward by a Friend, who wished a quantity for his own use; and the Editor, on personal apprehension it would be acceptable to many others of the same religious profession; especially as it does not appear to be in his works.

The copy from which this is taken, was printed by J. Bowle, 1707; some years before "G. Whitehead's Christian Progress," which is now out of print.

AN
EPISTLE
OF

True Christian Love;

TO ALL FRIENDS CALLED, OR REPUTED,

QUAKERS,

Who profess the True Light.

TO

*Remind them of the Beginning and Progress of the
Lord's Work and Ministry in our Day;*

WITH

**Christian Counsel and Caution for Love,
Concord, and Peace.**



BY THEIR ANCIENT FRIEND IN CHRIST,

G. WHITEHEAD.

*Have salt in yourselves, and peace one with another.—
MARK ix. 50.*

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AN EPISTLE

OR

True Christian Love,

TO

*All Friends, called or reputed Quakers,
who profess the True Light.*

DEAR and well-beloved Friends,
Brethren, and Sisters, both old and
young, whom I truly love in the Lord;
even with that ancient love which has
lived in my heart from the beginning. I
bless the worthy name and power of
the Lord our most gracious God, who
hath hitherto helped me and many others,
his faithful servants and ministers, in his
blessed work and service. And my soul's
breathing and supplication to Him, that

Father and Fountain of mercies, is, that his divine grace, love, and peace, with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, may be for ever continued unto you, and multiplied among you.

And, my dear friends and brethren, not knowing how soon my days here may come to a period, I having now been for a long time deeply concerned in the Lord's work and service, in his gospel ministry and harvest; it being above 52 years since I was first called forth to bear public testimony for his blessed truth, and dispensation of his Holy Spirit and new covenant; the Lord having prolonged my days much beyond my former expectations, because not only of the deep sufferings and severe persecutions, which I early underwent, but also the divers afflictions and exercises since; I am therefore now the more concerned to communicate to you, my dear friends, what is laid upon me; even in the love of my Heavenly Father, and for the help and advantage of future ages, of such as shall hereafter sincerely seek the Lord, and

the exaltation of truth and righteousness
in the earth.

Upon the 22d of the 7th month, 1705,
the power of the Lord came upon me
with great weight, to my great comfort
and refreshment, in a special manner
opening many weighty matters afresh, of
the state and condition of his peculiar
people, commonly called Quakers; as,
how we came truly to quake and trem-
ble at the word of God in the beginning,
and the real causes thereof, both under
the powerful ministration of the law and
judgments of God by his light, discover-
ing the nature and exceeding sinfulness
of sin; and also under the dispensation
of the gospel, in order to work out our
salvation, with fear and trembling; (the
light of the word ministering both law
and gospel,) when we knew our God so
to prepare our hearts, by working in us
both to will and to do: being also sen-
sible we could not thus work without
some inward sense and feeling of the
word and power of God, and his Christ,

working in us, true willingness, also faith, and ability. As there is a trembling of heart, and bowing of soul under the sense of judgment and mercy, there must be a giving up to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling; the same being required of the kings and judges of the earth, under the dispensation of the Son of God. (Psalm 8)

Now let it enter the hearts and considerations of all who are concerned, or in outward communion among us, both young and old, male and female, what it is to be a true quaker and trembler; to tremble at the word of God; to tremble at his judgments; to tremble at his presence; seeing that to "this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and he shall dwell at my word;" Isa. 66. 2. The Lord has a tender regard to them, and care over them, who are thus exercised in the inward sense of the word of life.

Yea, "Thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy

place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones ;" Isa. 57. 15.

Oh ! this contrite and humble spirit, is too much wanting ; where the word of life and power is not inwardly received, nor regarded ; where persons are lifted up, and exalted in their own wills and spirits, above the inward sense and feeling of this word, which would tender their hearts, and bow their spirits into a true contrition and godly sorrow ; where they can frequently resort to the solemn assemblies of the Lord's people, come and go as whole, and up in their spirits and fleshly minds and conceits, without any true remorse, brokenness, trembling or contrition of heart or spirit, before the Lord ; or at his presence. Surely a bitter cup of trembling will be given to such at last, if they repent not.

How many were there among us in early days, who came under those dispensations of the law and the gospel, under the sense of judgment and mercy, and trembled at the word ; and freely

submitted to judgment, that they might find mercy with God in Christ, who, in the midst of judgment remembered mercy, that he might be feared.

But how many now are there under an outward profession of Christ, and pretensions of religion, who never came under those dispensations, so as to be truly humbled, mortified or crucified unto the world, yet termed or reputed *Quakers*, when in reality they are not such as tremble at the word or presence of God, or because of his judgments; and yet there is as much loftiness of man in them to be laid low, and as much earth in them to be shaken, as ever was in any of us, at first, when we knew the glory of the Lord; that is, his power, to arise to shake terribly the earth, and to bring down the lofty looks, and lay low the pride and loftiness of man. Isa. 2. 11.

Wherefore I am sensible that quaking and trembling at the word and presence of the Lord God, as in the beginning, are as necessary to be reminded in the ministry and preaching, in these days of.

ease and liberty, as ever, to humble them who have not repented of their iniquities; being guilty of both manifest evils, and secret sins.

All the negligent and slothful, all the luke-warm and indifferent persons in religion, have need to repent; all contentious, quarrelsome, and disobedient persons, have need to repent and reform in their behaviours and conversations. All unjust, covetous, earthly-minded oppressors, and injurious persons, and all carnal libertines, and drunkards, have great need to repent, and be deeply humbled under the mighty hand of the Lord God. All proud, self-willed, self-exalted and unclean persons, with all whisperers, back-biters, and sowers of discord, have great cause to seek repentance, and to fear, dread, and tremble at the judgments and presence of the Lord God; and in order thereunto, such have need to be alarmed and awakened out of all their carnal security, fleshly ease, and false rests, unto repentance. If the Lord please to give them a place and hearts

to repent before they die, a terrible shaking, a deep sorrow, mourning and lamentation, must fall on such, before they come into a true rejoicing in the Lord, with trembling; for there must be a terrible shaking, before a joyful trembling.

Such as are careless and at ease in Sion, under truth's profession, and such as are declined from their first love and simplicity, which is in Christ, and unstable-minded ones, are apt to affect high strains, sudden and high flights, sounds and tones, more than sound matter; and then get into elevations and affectations, more than into humility, or weighty sense of life, and to imitate a sort of singing, which is neither with the spirit nor with understanding, as in the primitive churches of Christ; whereby too many, who are inexperienced in the work of God and Christ's ministry, are apt to be puffed up for one, against another, as those carnal ones among the Corinthians were, and to be exalted in self-conceit and imaginations, to value themselves above others, and far better than they

are ; and as such will judge of ministry and ministers by a partial affection, and not by sound judgment or divine sense ; so they are apt and ready to mistake an affectation and forced births ; for the divine power, and son of the free woman ; which is very pernicious, as tending to a kind of idolatrous bowing to that as the power, which is not the power of God, but a kind of likeness of things in heaven. Whereas the real work of the gospel ministry is foundation-work, 'tis edifying-work in a sound judgment, in a sound mind, in a clear understanding, and tending to bring people to be sound in the true and living faith, in the name and power of Christ Jésus ; even in that availing and effectual faith, which worketh by love ; so that this foundation-work of Christ's ministry tends to settle people's minds in humility, in self-denial, in the holy fear of the Lord, in the true light, upon the sure foundation that is laid in Sion, Christ the spiritual rock, upon which the true church is and shall be built, and must stand for ever.

This ministry of Christ, and his everlasting gospel, whose work is both convincing, converting and edifying, we received in the beginning by degrees, by little and little; it grew in us as we grew, in the seed of life eternal, as the Lord was pleased to open the same gradually unto us, and in us. We durst not strive to run into others' gifts; nor to lift up ourselves above our elders in Christ; or to make ourselves equal in the ministry with them, but to keep within our own measures and gifts. And our exercise therein towards others, was in a holy care, and in much fear, and also trembling inwardly; yea, and outwardly many times, that we might not exceed, stretch or strain beyond our own measures, or attainments; or strive to show ourselves equal to those before us in Christ, and more largely gifted in the ministry than we; but every one was careful to keep within the bounds of our own proper gifts and attainments; and herein, under this care, the Lord helped us; blessed us with his power and presence; and gave

his increase and success in his blessed work; to our inward comfort and great encouragement; blessed be his glorious name and power for ever.

We knew it to be our concern diligently to wait, and singly attend upon the Lord our God, in humility and fear; that we might have a true sense of the state and condition of meetings, where the Lord ordered us; and that He would open to us a ministry and testimonies, suitable to the states and conditions of the hearers, so that we might perceive and feel where people were prepared and quick of hearing, and where dull of hearing; a door of entrance being opened in the first, as well as a door of utterance towards them; but the latter being dull of hearing, things were hard to be uttered unto them, especially of the mysteries of Christ's kingdom and gospel.

There must be a shaking of the earth, and the heavens also, before people come to a right and clear understanding in the mysteries of Christ's kingdom; and to serve the Lord our God with grace, with

reverence and godly fear, wherein that kingdom that cannot be shaken, must be received. The false faith, the false hope, the false rests, the false peace, the false joy, must all be shaken and removed, as well as the heavy earthly part in men, if ever they come to stability in Christ Jesus and his kingdom, that cannot be shaken or removed.

7 "Tremble, O Earth," O ye inhabitants of the earth, "at the presence of the God of Jacob and Israel;" and all ye heavens, (which must be removed) false rests, false peace and joy, set up and formed in the imagination of earthly minds and wills of fallen men and woman, be ye removed, that Christ may be perceived and exalted, and his kingdom known and set up. The piercing, discerning word, pierceth through dark hearts, minds and spirits, to bring men to know their inward states and conditions, secret thoughts, desires and intentions; and this word discovers and smites, not only at evils manifestly gross, as drunkenness, lewdness, &c.

but also at spiritual wickedness in high places; and will work a thorough work of sanctification and salvation in them who in meekness receive and obey the same word.

And, dear friends and brethren, our God being a God of love and peace, a God of order, and not of strife or confusion; let his love and peace dwell in your hearts, and therein mind your unity, that love may grow and abound among you; and do all things and services you are called unto, in love; even in the tender peaceable life and spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ; according to those apostolical exhortations: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves;" and "Do all things without murmurings and disputings," Phil. ii. 3, 14. And, "If any man seem to be contentious; we have no such custom, neither the churches of God," 1 Cor. 11. For we know very well, that truth's testimony is against all turbulent, forward,

and contentious spirits; and such ought not to bear sway, rule, or sit as judges or instructors about truth's affairs, order or discipline in the church; but true judgment and power of God, to rule and be set over all.

And seeing truth's testimony, in all the parts and branches thereof, ought, in the fear of God, to be observed and kept, certainly the payment of just debts in due time, the due performance of covenants, and promises thereof, is no small branch of that testimony, but concerns the very practice of truth, and true religion; and the contrary, namely, refusing the payment of just debts, breaking promises or delaying payment, to the injury and oppression of creditors; this is directly contrary to truth's testimony, and a violation thereof, and condemnable in the sight of God and man, as well as covetousness, oppression, extortion, defrauding and over-reaching others.

How can such be esteemed true Christians, who are corrupt in their morals? Or, how should they be entrusted with

the true and durable riches, who are not just in the Mammon of this world? Covetousness, which is idolatry; hastening to be rich; and an eager pursuit after the riches of this world, have been the ruin of many. Thereby they have fallen into many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. Therefore stand clear; and keep clear out of all these evils, and all occasions of reproach and scandal; and stand for truth's holy testimony in all things. O! all be careful so to live in truth and righteousness, as you may leave a good report behind you when you die.

And for the honour of this our testimony, and good reputation of the blessed truth, professed by us, it greatly concerns all ministers, elders, and overseers in the churches of Christ among us, to be blameless in their conversations, agreeably to our holy profession. The rulers and judges, which Moses set over the people of "Israel, to judge even in the small matters, were required to be able men, such as feared God; men of truth,

hating covetousness," Exod. 18. As "he that ruleth over men must be just," ruling in the fear of God; so Christ's ministers, elders, and overseers in his church, must be "blameless, not greedy of filthy lucre, not covetous, &c." Moreover, he that is "a bishop, or overseer; must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the Devil." As the holy apostle Paul does more fully set forth the state and qualifications of such; see 1 Tim. 3. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; and so doth the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3, 4, 5; see also Hebr. 13. 7, 17.

'Tis the life of Christ Jesus which must preach in his ministers and servants; 'tis a righteous, innocent, and unblameable conversation must preach; 'tis such ministers who live therein, who are meet to make full proof of their ministry, by witnessing against all that is contrary thereunto. What authority have any to preach against covetousness, vice, immorality and injustice, who are

guilty thereof themselves? Surely no divine authority, life or power, when they are conscious to themselves, as being guilty therein. 'Tis truth and righteousness must come over all, and work through all, and prevail: and the Lamb must have the victory; in whose meekness and innocency do you all live and dwell.

And, I beseech all friends, young and old, for the Lord's sake, and the honour of his glorious name and holy truth, and as holy examples, be diligent and careful in keeping your meetings, which are intended entirely for the worship of the living God, observing the times and seasons thereof.

And as the Lord's power and wisdom have been, and are the authority of your meetings, concerned in the church's affairs; namely, both those of the faithful men, and those of the faithful women; do you all humbly wait to feel the same, and be in subjection to the same blessed power, in the holy fear of Almighty God; that his Holy Spirit and power may sanctify and overshadow all your assem-

blies, to his praise, and your great consolation in our Lord Jesus Christ. O! all wait for his wisdom and counsel, who is the Wonderful Counsellor, and keep in his love one toward another; wherein is unity, concord and peace; and his glory will shine over all among you in all your solemn meetings to his praise, and your great comfort, who hath gathered and settled our meetings, both those of men and women, for his service, in the exercise of true love and charity, and real practice of that pure religion which the Lord our God hath revealed and called us unto, and appeared to exalt in this day, of his great love and grace extended to us his people, wherein he is making up his jewels; that his Sion, his church, may become the perfection of beauty, and the praise of the whole earth; "for out of Sion, the perfection of beauty hath God shined," and will shine; glory and dominion be unto our God, and to the Lamb on the Throne, for ever and ever. Amen.

Let God arise, and his enemies be scattered ; let the Lord reign, that the earth may rejoice ; let Sion's King reign in righteousness, and prosper. *Amen, Amen.*



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